

REGION OF MOZAMBIQUE

cipate yearly in the great initiation festival for boys and girls. Consequently as they repeat each year the lessons of their own initiation, the ceremonies are the main vehicle of Yao culture.¹ 88/ 852

There are also two Moslem ceremonies:

- (1) *Janda*, the boys' Moslem baptism, which takes about seven days, and is usually worked in with *Apanda*: 81/ 852 177
- (2) *Nwanda*, the girls' Moslem baptism, which is the same as *janda*, but usually quite separate from *cipate*. It is important that the wife of a Moslem should have her *nwanda* so that she knows how to prepare the food properly at Ramadan.

MENSTRUATION AND OTHER TABOOS

Menstruation is held to be dangerous. A special mat is used by the woman during this time, and is rolled up and kept during the rest of the cycle. The hut is completely replastered after menstruation. Intercourse during menses leads to disease of the man. Sexual contact is dangerous to persons at certain other periods: during initiation ceremonies, during mourning, and for babies who have not been through the protective rite. The danger is thought to lie in *adaka*, a dread disease characterized by swelling. This may be transmitted by salt in the food. Deaths are often attributed to 'sak'. Much of the significance of the mourning is that medicines are prepared which protect the mourners against the dangers attendant on sexual activity. 84/ 834

BURIAL RITES

News of a death must be sent to the chief by a messenger carrying a single fowl. The chief gives a present of calico for wrapping the body, and a goat for the burial men. These are called *awilo*, neighbours unrelated to the dead, who volunteer for certain duties. They prepare the body for burial and carry it in procession to the graveyard outside the village. No uninitiated person is allowed to see the funeral. All who attend the burial are prohibited from sexual intercourse for one month. After this time the prohibition is lifted by a ceremony of beer drinking and feasting, and on the following day all fires in the village are extinguished, and then relit, and the mourners are shaved. A year later beer is brewed for a final ceremony. 764 303 431

For a period after her husband's death a widow is unclean, and has to be purified by ritual intercourse with a man who is paid. The widow is not allowed to remarry for two or three years. A widower leaves his wife's village, after receiving a parting gift. The widows of ordinary persons are not inherited. If a man has himself a 'name' (rank and social position), he has an heir, who inherits also the wives of his predecessor. But if the heir (the maternal nephew) has married a cross-cousin (mother's brother's daughter) he would not consider the wife's mother as his inherited wife. 768 588 587

Before the burial the dead man's hut used to be destroyed, together with his possessions. Immediately afterwards a consultation is held as to whether retaliatory action against sorcerers is called for. The *awilo*'s duties include not only the conducting of the burial, but also the subsequent inquiry and the conduct of the second ceremony, the beer drinking, at which they shave the mourners. A man who has 764 767

¹ Main sources for girls' initiation: Heckel, 1925, p. 19; Sweeney, 1, 1920, pp. 146-7; 2, 1922, pp. 269-74; Sweeney and Dorey, 1923; Duff, 1923, pp. 312-15; Abdallah, 1925, pp. 18-17; Mindehelli, 1926, vol. 1, pp. 125-30; Warner, 1926, pp. 126-7; Johnson, 1897, p. 412.

PEOPLES OF THE LAKE NYASA REGION

764 performed these services used to enter a special relationship of privileged familiarity with the village of the dead. This has died out in Nyasaland, but accounts of *Utani*² among the Yao at Mambi and Songra suggest that something of the kind is still practiced.

765 Chiefs and headmen are not buried outside the village, as are other persons. They used to be buried before their own huts, but now in the centre of the village. Shrines were raised over their graves, at which offerings of beer and flour were made. If the village was moved the pot of holy mud into the ground at the chief's grave was also removed and reinstated at the new site. A dead slave was buried by his fellow slaves; normal rights of sepulture were denied to suicides and to persons who had died in taking the poison ordeal (that is, convicted sorcerers).³

OTHER DISTINCTIVE CULTURAL FEATURES

304 The Yao have a tribal mark of two short cuts on each side of the face between the 305 eye and the ear.⁴ Their women did not wear the *pelele*, lip-ring, although their neighbours the Makua and Makonde did;⁵ the fashion seems to have spread to south Nyasa in the 1880's, as many travellers commented on it, without distinguishing whether the wearers were Yao, Nyanja, or Lomwe.⁶ The women used to pierce the left side nose and insert a metal or lead stud, *zipini*.⁷

MAKUA-LOMWE

TRIBAL AND SUB-TRIBAL GROUPINGS AND DEMOGRAPHY

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NOMENCLATURE

The *Ma-* in *Makua* is not a prefix, but part of the name. Variant spellings are *Makua*, *Makua*, *Makwau*. They are sometimes referred to by the name of one subdivision, the *Makw Makua*, and called *Anete* or *Meto*.⁸

The *Lomwe* (also spelt *Lomwa*) are called *Akha* by the Yao, and are also frequently called *Ngwira* (*Ngwira*) which is an old name for the people of the region.⁹ Any of the Makua-Lomwe peoples who have migrated into south Nyasaland are collectively termed *Ngwira* in official reports; *Ngwira* is a hill in the region of Portuguese East Africa, whence they came, but they should not be confused with the *Ngwira* of Tanganyika.¹⁰ Another name for them is *Arilwe*.¹¹ *Akha* is incorrectly applied to all the Lomwe; it has a stricter application to the *Cusbo* from Quilimane.

² Swinerton, 1937; Mawzy, 1925; Spies, 1925.

³ Main sources for burial are: Johnson, p. 192, pp. 26-27; Swinerton, p. 192, pp. 24-4; Abubakar, 1929, pp. 12-21; Duff, 1925, pp. 22-23; Macdonald, *ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 22-23.

⁴ Mawzy, 1925, p. 125.

⁵ Thompson, *ibid.*, pp. 27-8, writing of the Yao of the Barotsa valley.

⁶ Macdonald, *ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 24-27; "around Shanyu hardly any woman is without it".

⁷ Swinerton, p. 192, p. 24.

⁸ *Handbook of Portuguese Nyasaland*, 1921, p. 20; Mawzy, 1925, p. 25; Wade, p. 192, p. 192; Livingston, 1876, p. 25.

⁹ Thiel, *ibid.*, pp. 47-47; Cooper Swinerton passed through Mangoch country. Swinerton, 1873 (Lancaster's journey, 1796), mentions Mangoch.

¹⁰ Abubakar, 1925, p. 12; Mawzy, 1925, p. 25.

¹¹ Johnson, W. P., p. 189.

THE WAYAO OF NYABALAND

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person, he may also give a goat. The custom is to wrap up the body of the dead, the goat is for the undertaker, *mohe*.¹

Until eight or ten years ago, the Wayao buried their dead in a posture of complete flexion. The preparation of the body after death is carried out by friends from a neighboring village who volunteer for the service. They are known as *mohe*, (sing. *mohe*). Macdonald² thinks the word originally meant relatives; it has essentially the opposite meaning now. The corpse is washed in ordinary water and no anointment is made. The limbs, formerly, were then bound on the body and at all the joints. The clenched hands were placed under the chin of the bent head or the hands were spread over the face of the flexed head, while the legs were tightly bent at the knees and brought up close against the abdomen. The corpse was securely bound in this position³ and adorned with a hair-cloth of bark. The body of a man found stiff and extended was a source of great trouble. Water was heated, and the body bathed until it was as relaxed as possible. As much force would then be applied as was necessary to gain the required degree of flexion, the bones often being broken in the process.

In the case of a woman, her female friends put on her back-thrust hair covering, but the washing and trussing up of the body were usually done by men unless there were some women particularly skilled in the operation. [767]

The flexed body was then set up on the deceased's sleeping mat within the hut, and from time to time, as long as it remained exposed, it was washed, people coming from other villages to offer their services for this task. Watchmen sat continually by the body, the wife and perhaps a brother on either side, while others slept in the hut to take their turn later. The rest of the mourners sat on the veranda about the door.

As soon as the *mohe* had finished their work, wailing began, started by the wife and carried on by all the women of the village and the women relatives from elsewhere. Wailing continued all day until about ten in the evening, and then started again between two and three in the morning. This went on for three or four days or was intermittent for a longer time, always recommencing with the arrival of a party from another village. I have never heard of flour being put on the heads by Yao mourners, as mentioned in Africa.⁴ 765

News of a death was always sent to all the relatives, and burial might be delayed to allow for the arrival of those from a distance. Under such circumstances, the body was encased in a matting of bark, the ends being closed by bamboo pegs. Exaggerated signs of grief were sometimes made by the mourners who beat their breasts with their hands while they knocked their heads against the ground or a wall, but the Yao did not indulge in the customs of the *Akye* near Lake Chivera who practiced a kind of flagellation, the wailers within the house meeting any new-comers at the door and beating them with sticks. This treatment was not unusual. Women alone did the wailing; a man indulging in such expression would be laughed at. His part in the old days when the natives practiced *Siamese* was

¹ *W. H. S. S.*, p. 105.² *Op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 105.³ *Ibid.*

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[53] to fire off his gun as long as his powder lasted. During the period of mourning, drumming went on continuously, *chindinda* being played on the three small drums called *shame*. With the exception of the fixed attitude of the body, the foregoing description is a correct account of what happens today. The body is now fully extended.

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764 [54] The *sele* are two or four in number, although other friends may assist in all their services. On about the third day, the *sele* sew up the body in bark cloth, completely enveloping it; a bamboo needle is used and left sticking in the cloth at the last stitch. The body is then enclosed in a mat slung on a pole, and carried from the hut to the grave. First, the procession makes a round of the village, passing by all the houses which the dead man used to visit, and over all the paths he used to cross. His children and those of his relatives under seven or eight years old gather in the village, and throw pieces of charcoal toward the body as it passes, "so that they shall forget the dead man," or run after the corpse, while some use sprinkles medicine over them.

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[54] As the procession leaves the village, it is headed by the drums playing *chindinda*, but after a few hundred yards, only the *ching'anga* drum, now called *chindinda*, beats time for a short distance; the procession then goes on quietly. Following the drums, walks the mother or another relative carrying *shour* with which the grave will be marked out. Behind this mourner, the body is borne by the *sele*. The *sele* are always the first to carry the body, but are later relieved by other friends of the deceased; no one would ever ask to be relieved. After the chief mourner, follow the other relatives and friends, the men first, the women behind. Boys just back from their *wagaps* attend to learn the customs. All the relatives of the deceased go to the burial, contrary to Macdonald's account.

In this order, the procession reaches some two thirty or forty yards from the place of burial where the corpse is put down in the shade, *whala*, "cooling place", and while the women and part of the men watch beside it, the *sele* proceed to the burial place. They cut branches from a sacred tree, and strew them on the path. On approaching the appointed spot, they clap their hands in salutation, asking that the burial ground be opened to them.

The head *sele* chooses the site where the grave shall be dug, after which the mourner marks out the limits with the *shour* she has brought. In the days when the body was buried in contracted posture, a circular grave was dug just big enough to allow two men to work in it. Eight feet was the usual depth but this was decided by the deceased's spouse, if he were living, otherwise, by his near relatives. In the east side of this circular wall, a cave was excavated, just large enough to admit the contracted corpse. When all was prepared, the body accompanied by all the mourners, was brought from *whala* to the graveyard. The chief *sele* with a friend of the man's family and one of his wife's, standing in the grave received the body and placed it in the cave, resting on a mat and covered with bark cloth. The body lay on its side with its back toward the wall, and its face looking

765 might not break up for a week, but the practice was often modified to some degree, people returning to their homes during the day and coming back each night to sleep in the deceased's village. At the present time, there is a tendency to cut the proceedings short, and the mourners generally disperse on the second day after the funeral. This period of waiting is usually whiled away by playing and singing *abidinda*.

766 On the day before the company leaves the village — now, often on the day after the
765 funeral — the ceremony of sharing the head takes place. The *sele*, assisted in the case of a large party, by those who helped at the burial, shares the head of all the dead man's relatives. When this is completed, they begin to tear down the deceased's house. The grass from the roof, with the hair removed from the heads of all the relatives, is carried to the cross-roads and burned. The walls of earth are torn down and made into a heap; on the top, a stick is raised, and at its base is placed the dead man's skull box. Sometimes a cactus *sapote*, *agave*, is planted on the mound and mourners round about. The skull box is kept replenished with snuff. This, with the *camara*, is reserved for the *sele*; no one else may partake of them.

While the house is being pulled down, the chief *sele* ties around the neck of the widow a single string of beads or a small piece of calico, *ag'waji*. After the house has been demolished, the *sele* returns to their homes and on the following morning, everyone else departs.

767 The position of *sele* is a strange one. Every man in the course of his life probably acts as undertaker for some friend; many have probably performed the service several times. He receives no regular payment, but beads, and, nowadays, wine are often thrown into the pot of water with which he wets the heads of those he shares after the funeral, and he has the freedom of the village in which he has so acted forever afterward, the degree of freedom being determined by the distance which he has travelled to officiate. When Wandakana died, a headman named Chini from Makanjila's on Lake Nyasa, over a hundred miles away, acted as one of the *sele*. The occasions on which he revisited Makanya's village are well remembered, as they were marked by much frolicking and some ceremony. He was the recipient of numerous presents of fowls, sheep, and anything else he cared to take, and having commanded men from the village to carry these gifts for him, he would leave, accompanied by all the people, yelling and shouting their joy at seeing him again.

[431] Any fowls or other provisions that friends may present to the deceased's relatives at the time of the funeral to help defray expenses are given to the *sele*; no one else may eat them. Some may be kept against the next death in the family.

768 A few days after the funeral, recourse is had to the chief to settle whether any action
622 must be taken in regard to the cause of the death. Some near relative of the dead man will be chosen for this purpose; he must not be shared by the *sele* at the time of the funeral. The consultation takes place at some secluded spot outside the village. The chief always brings some one with him to witness what is said. On arriving at the appointed place, the chief selects the unknown mourner who is probably accompanied by other relatives, and